

~~TOP SECRET~~

80

25X1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
10 November 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED HEREIN IS NOT AUTHORIZED

25X1

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page Denied

10 November 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

A combined US/South Vietnamese Marine operation has been launched north of Chu Lai in an attempt to sweep Route 1. The level of Viet Cong activity for the period 30 October - 6 November remained high for the fifth consecutive week but the intensity declined. US casualties for the period --309--were the highest on record. Peking has leveled a sharp polemical blast at the Soviet leadership which is intended as a sharp admonition to Hanoi against reliance on Moscow and as a warning against alleged Soviet efforts to promote a negotiated settlement.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Operation BLUE MARLIN, a combined 2,100-man USMC/South Vietnamese Marine amphibious assault strike force, was launched early today 25 miles north of Chu Lai (Para. 1). Paratroop elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and one Australian battalion yesterday terminated Operation HUMP, a five-day search-and-destroy ground sweep in Bien Hoa Province (Para. 2). Twelve USAF B-52s yesterday launched the second attack in two days against a suspected Viet Cong training and bivouac area in Bien Hoa Province, 30 nautical miles northeast of Saigon (Para. 3). Communist guerrillas, possibly in company strength, yesterday initiated harassing attacks against a government outpost and two hamlets in Kien Giang Province (Para. 4). According to MACV's Weekly Military Report for 30 October - 6 November, Viet Cong terrorist and military activity remained at a relatively high level for the fifth consecutive week, although the number of Communist-initiated incidents decreased from 782 to 731; however, the intensity of enemy operations reflected a sharp decline (Paras. 6-9). The current status of South Vietnam's major transportation routes and the coastal railroad has been reported (Para. 10). ARVN, Viet Cong, and US personnel and weapons losses sustained during 30 October - 6 November have been received from MACV (Paras. 11-13).

II. Political Developments in Saigon: The US Embassy believes that a communiqué issued during the week by Vietnamese Catholic leaders, urging the government to pay heed to various nonmilitary problems, is reflective of increasing Catholic disenchantment with the Saigon regime (Paras. 1-2).

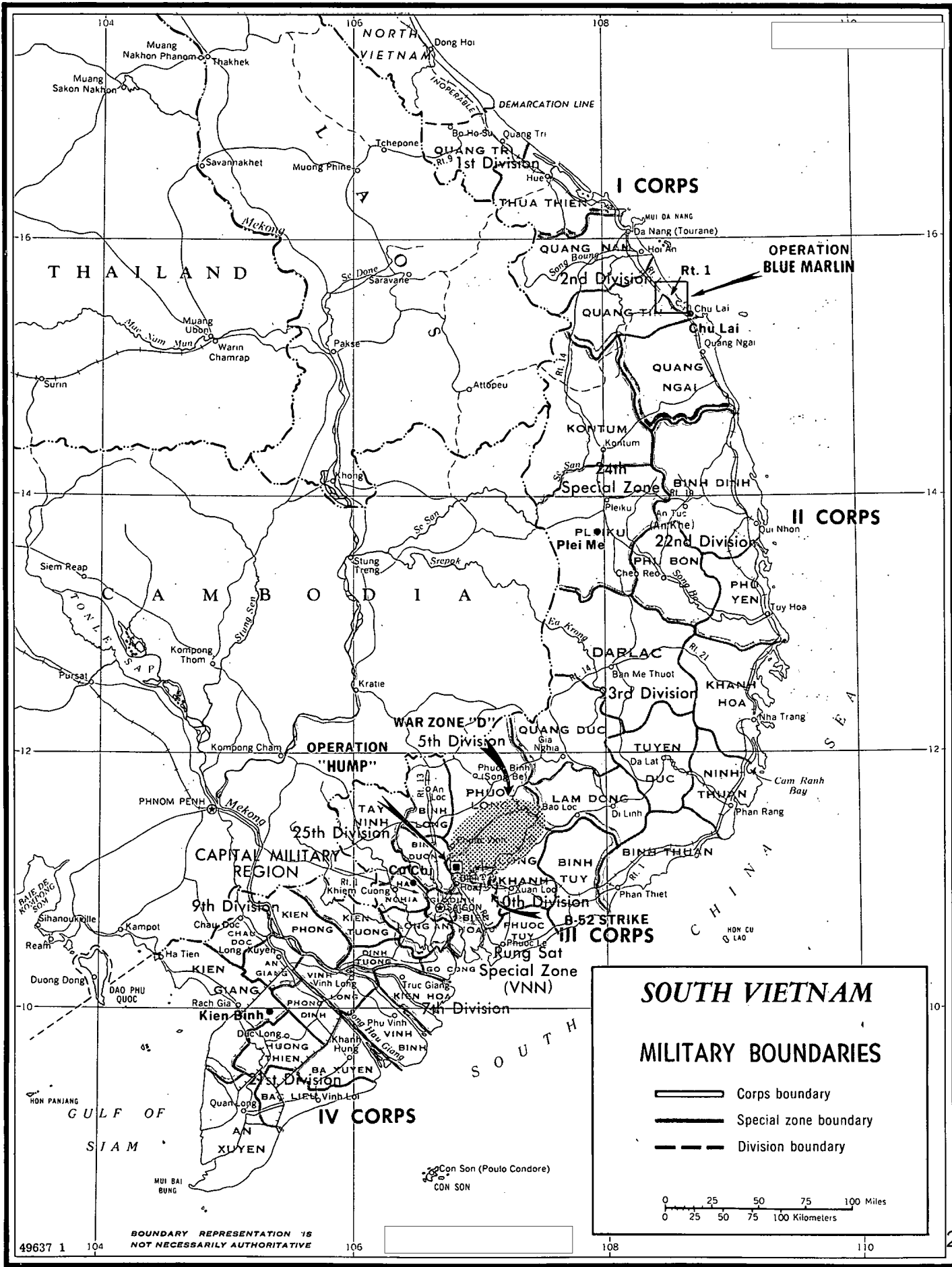
25X1

V. Communist Political Developments: A Chinese Communist polemical blast at the Soviet leadership is intended as an admonition to Hanoi against reliance on Moscow and as a warning against alleged Soviet efforts to promote a negotiated settlement (Paras. 1 through 3). Peking continues to highlight the opposition in the US to American policy in Vietnam (Para. 4). The Chinese claim that US aircraft strafed a Chinese merchant ship on 31 October (Paras. 5 and 6).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Hanoi may be stepping up its effort to deliver supplies into South Vietnam via roads in Laos. (Paras. 1 and 2).

10 November 1965

25X1



25X1

25X1

I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Operation BLUE MARLIN, a combined USMC/South Vietnamese Marine amphibious assault was launched early today approximately 25 miles north of Chu Lai. The 2,100-man strike force, composed of 1,500 personnel from the 2nd Battalion/7th US Marines and 600 personnel from the 3rd ARVN Marine Battalion, was scheduled to sweep both sides of coastal Route 1 from the landing beach south to Chu Lai. A 1,200-man USMC Special Landing Force (SLF) is being held in ships off-shore as a floating reserve. No contact has been reported thus far with the Viet Cong.

2. Paratroop elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and one Australian infantry battalion yesterday terminated Operation HUMP, a five-day search-and-destroy ground sweep northwest of Bien Hoa near the guerrilla-infested War Zone "D" stronghold. Final Viet Cong losses have been placed at 403 killed (US body count), an additional estimated 200 killed and carried away, five captured, and 15 ralliers accepted. In addition, the allied operational task force captured 260 tons of rice, 4.7 tons of salt, one ton of small arms ammunition, and one-quarter ton of mortar ammunition. Friendly losses totaled 50 killed (48 US) and 107 wounded (101 US).

3. Twelve USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday conducted the second saturation bombing mission in two days against a suspected Viet Cong training and bivouac area in Bien Hoa Province, 30 nautical miles northeast of Saigon. Once again, no poststrike ground exploitation of the drop zone was planned.

10 November 1965

I-1

25X1

4. Viet Cong forces, possibly in company strength, yesterday initiated harassing attacks against a government outpost and two hamlets in Kien Giang Province, 90 miles southwest of Saigon. Friendly casualties included 41 killed, 15 wounded, and 20 missing. An ARVN reaction force of two reinforced battalions was subsequently dispatched to reinforce the besieged garrisons. Late MACV reports indicate that only one guerrilla has been killed thus far.

5. Early today, enemy units reportedly probed the defense perimeters of elements of 1st Brigade/US 1st Air Cavalry Division near Plei Me. No casualties were reported. In addition, the district town of Kien Binh in Kien Giang Province was shelled by heavy Communist mortar fire. Meanwhile, in Hau Nghia Province, an ARVN company en route to its home base at Cu Chi after an operation was ambushed by an unknown number of Viet Cong, reportedly suffering "moderate" casualties.

6. According to MACV's Weekly Military Report for the period 30 October - 6 November, Viet Cong terrorist and military activity remained at a high level for the fifth consecutive week, although the number of Communist-initiated incidents decreased from 782 to 731. However, the intensity of enemy operations declined sharply, as reflected in the significantly reduced number of armed attacks and ambushes launched (six) and in the number of personnel and weapons losses sustained by both ARVN and Viet Cong forces. The week did prove costly for American combat forces, as US battle casualties rose to 309--the highest weekly toll since the war began.

10 November 1965

I-2

25X1

7. The most significant fighting of the week was again centered near the Vietnamese Special Forces camp at Plei Me, in the central highlands of Pleiku Province. Brigade-strength elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division took advantage of their air mobility and aerial surveillance capability to conduct numerous, widely separated search-and-destroy operations, raids, and company-size ambushes against Viet Cong installations and troop concentrations in a 35-square-mile block between Plei Me and the Cambodian border. Battalion-strength or larger Viet Cong/PAVN forces offered determined resistance to the aggressive US operations, and on two occasions launched heavy counterattacks against 1st Cavalry ambush positions.

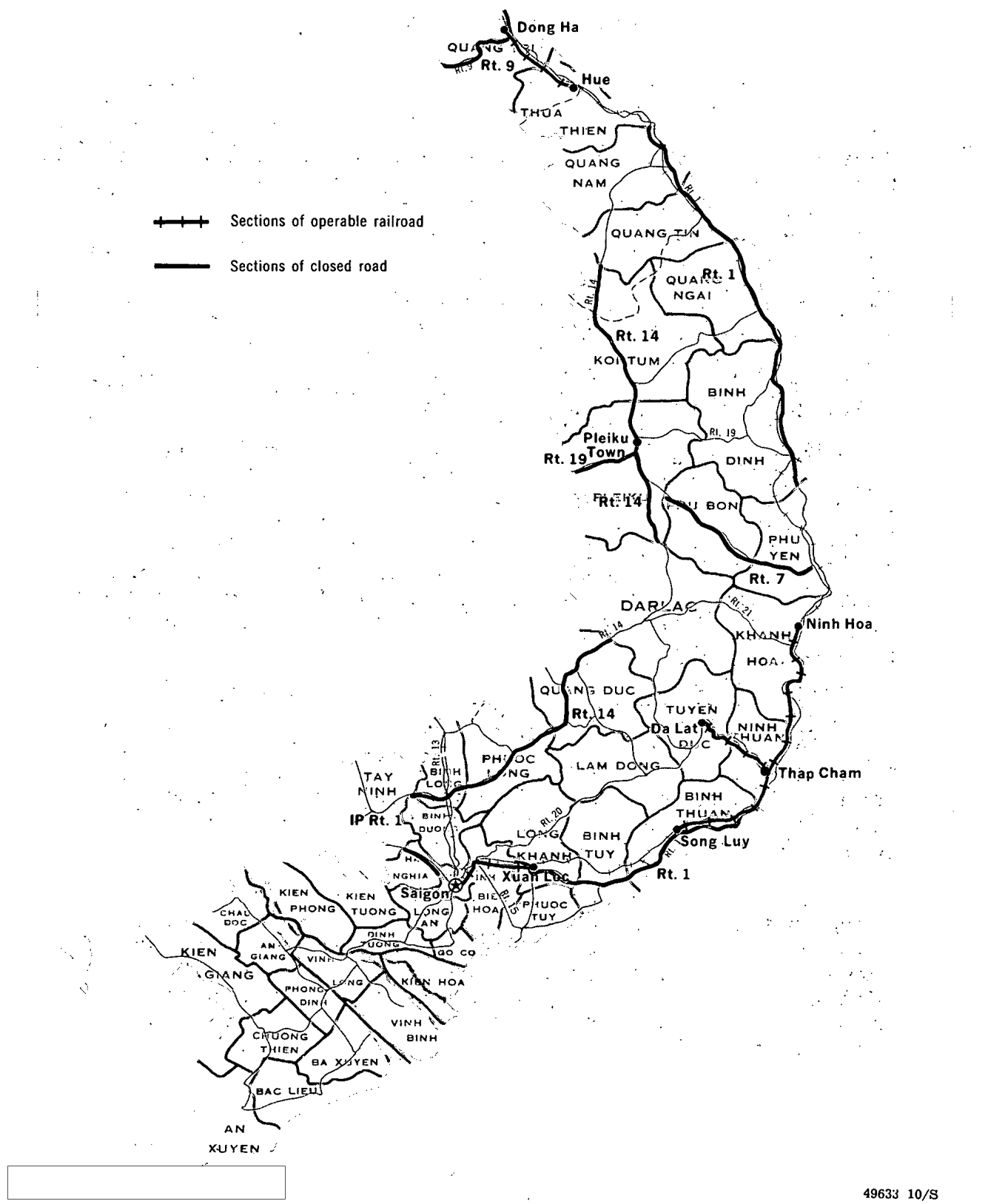
8. Of the six attacks conducted by Communist units during the week, four were large scale, including two battalion-strength and two company-size assaults. In addition to the battalion-echelon counterattacks in Pleiku Province, an estimated Viet Cong battalion on 4 November attacked and overran an ARVN Ranger company providing security for an outpost under construction in Kien Hoa Province, inflicting heavy GVN casualties. The area in which this assault occurred, coupled with the high incident rate and the number of secondary explosions observed in the past two months in the area, confirms the importance the Viet Cong attach to their transport/liaison corridor from Kien Hoa to Tay Ninh Province. The Viet Cong also launched company-size attacks in Quang Ngai and Pleiku provinces on 2 and 5 November, respectively.

10 November 1965

I-3

25X1

CURRENT STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND THE COASTAL RAILROAD



9. A statistical comparison of last week's guerrilla activity with that of the previous week follows:

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>At-tacks</u>	<u>Ter-rorism</u>	<u>Sabo-tage</u>	<u>Propa-ganda</u>	<u>Anti-Aircraft</u>	<u>Total In-cidents</u>
23-30 Oct	14	446	105	43	174	782
30 Oct-6 Nov	6	481	81	38	125	731

10. As to the current status of South Vietnam's major transportation routes and the coastal railroad, National Route 1 is closed in Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Binh Thuan, Binh Tuy, and Long Khanh provinces; Route 9 is closed in Quang Tri Province; Route 14 is closed in Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Duc, Phuoc Long, and Binh Long provinces; Route 19 is closed west of Pleiku town; Route 7 is closed in Phu Bon and Phu Yen provinces; and Interprovincial Route 1 is closed in Hau Nghia Province. The coastal railroad is operational from Saigon to Xuan Loc (Long Khanh Province); from Song Luy (Binh Thuan Province) to Ninh Hoa (Khanh Hoa Province); from Dalat (Tuyen Duc Province) to Thap Cham (Ninh Thuan Province); and from Hue to Dong Ha (Quang Tri Province).

11. ARVN casualties during the period 30 October - 6 November totaled 510 (144 KIA, 288 WIA, and 78 MIA/captured), a considerable decline from the previous week's total of 1,199 casualties (363 KIA, 773 WIA, and 63 MIA/captured). ARVN weapons losses decreased to 206 (none crew-served) from the 317 weapons (13 crew-served) reported lost last week.

12. During 30 October - 6 November, the Viet Cong sustained 733 known casualties (536 KIA and 197 captured) a sharp reduction in comparison with the previous week's total of 1,397 casualties (1,264 KIA and 133 captured). Government forces captured 210 weapons (four crew-served) in contrast to the 358 weapons (12 crew-served) seized last week.

10 November 1965

I-4

25X1

13. US battle casualties processed at the close of the 30 October - 6 November MACV reporting period totaled 309 (70 KIA, 237 WIA, and two MIA/captured), a slight increase from the previous week's corrected casualty total of 295 (42 KIA, 251 WIA, and two MIA/captured). American nonbattle casualties numbered 18 (13 deaths and five injuries); last week's corrected total in this category was 12 (11 deaths and one injury).

10 November 1965

I-5

25X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The US Embassy reports that a communiqué was issued last week from the liaison office of the Catholic archbishopric in Saigon urging the government not to neglect certain nonmilitary problems in its vigorous pursuit of the war effort. These nonmilitary problems were identified as including the widespread desire for democratic institutions, the dangers of internal division and of inflation, and the possibility of "misunderstandings" arising in South Vietnam's relations with friendly governments. The communiqué bore the signatures of two prominent priests, Ho Van Vui, who is a leader of southern Vietnamese Catholics, and Hoang Quynh, a leader of the northern refugee Catholics.

2. According to the apostolic delegate in Saigon, the communiqué is not an official church document. He added, however, that although he had complained to diocesan authorities about it, he considered it moderately worded and constructive, and not indicative of any Catholic coup plotting. The US Embassy believes, however, that the communiqué was somewhat barbed in tone, and probably reflects growing Catholic disenchantment with the regime.

10 November 1965

II-1

25X1

Page Denied

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A polemical blast at the Soviet leadership by Peking on 11 November is clearly intended as a sharp admonition to Hanoi against reliance on Moscow and a warning against alleged Soviet efforts to promote a negotiated settlement.

2. Attacking Brezhnev and Kosygin by name, the Chinese assert in the People's Daily and Red Flag that the Soviet leaders have ulterior motives in giving aid--dismissed as a "certain amount" in no way commensurate with Soviet capabilities--and are in fact doing so only to keep the situation in Vietnam "under their control with the object of striking a "bargain with the US on it." The article charges that last February the Soviets proposed to Peking and Hanoi that a new international conference on Vietnam be called "without prior conditions" which the Chinese assert was nothing more than advocacy of "unconditional negotiations." When this effort failed, the Soviets allegedly proceeded unilaterally to discuss the question with the French, and communicated Moscow's desire for negotiations to various other Communist parties. According to Peking, the Soviets then went on to collaborate with the Indians and Yugoslavs in their efforts to act as "brokers" in the Vietnam question.

3. The Chinese make it clear that they have no intention of moderating their criticism of Soviet policy in Vietnam and issue what amounts to a demand that Hanoi follow Peking's lead. This latest outburst may reflect anger over recent indications that the North Vietnamese are continuing to take a middle position in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

4. Peking continued its effort to highlight opposition in the US to American policy in Vietnam. Speaking at a reception celebrating the 12th anniversary of Cambodian independence, Chen Yi on 9 November asserted that the American people

10 November 1965

V-1

25X1

are unfolding "an extensive campaign" of antiwar demonstrations "unprecedented in scope" in US history and on 10 November NCNA quickly picked up and reported the self-immolation of Norman Morrison on the previous day as the second such "antiwar protest" in the past eight days. While the Chinese apparently hold an exaggerated impression of the strength of anti-Vietnam war sentiment in the US, Peking almost certainly sees such a movement as having a long-range rather than an immediate effect on US policy and is pressing the Vietnamese Communists to continue the war until final victory.

5. Peking Radio Domestic Service on 10 November asserted that a US military aircraft had strafed the Chinese merchant ship S. S. Nanhai No. 146 at 1047 hours on 31 October on the open sea south of Peitienyu. Declaring that the ship was on a regular trade mission from south China to the DRV, the broadcast asserted that this "piratical act" of the US was a repetition of similar "provocations" against Chinese merchant ships and fishing vessels which had occurred in June, July and August. The broadcast, however, contained no threat of Chinese retaliation other than the routine warning that the US Government "must bear full responsibility for the serious consequences arising from this act."

6. We have no evidence that this incident took place. US aircraft have been flying photoreconnaissance missions on Chinese ships in this area, however, and it is possible that the crew of the ship mistook the camera noise and flashes for firing, as was apparently done by the crew of the Soviet ship Polotsk which claimed to have been strafed by US aircraft on 7 August.

10 November 1965

V-2

25X1

VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Hanoi may be stepping up its efforts to deliver supplies into South Vietnam. There are indications that truck traffic along routes in southern Laos which are used to transport supplies to the Viet Cong may have resumed. If confirmed, this means that traffic southward has begun about a month early.

2. A roadwatch team stationed near the junction of Routes 12 and 23--just south of the Mu Gia Pass on the Laos - North Vietnamese border--was attacked and driven from its station by Communist patrols on 12 October. This action could have been for the purpose of preventing observation of truck traffic coming from North Vietnam.

3. Photography [] showed tracks on the road south of Mu Gia Pass for about 10-12 miles where photographic coverage of the road ended. Although roadwatch teams stationed on Route 23 about 50 miles south of its junction with Route 12 did not see any trucks moving south between 10 October and 3 November, traffic could have moved over the new and more direct Route 911, which is not under observation by watch teams.

25X1

10 November 1965

VI-1

25X1

TOP SECRET